News



Extensive vandalism at a parish building on the campus of St. Ann Church in Olmitz, Kansas, is seen in this image, taken during a July 10, 2025, investigation by the Barton County Sheriff's Office. (OSV News/Barton County Sheriff's Office)

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Pittsburgh — July 21, 2025
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Newly installed Bishop Mark Eckman of Pittsburgh has expressed his "great sorrow" over "hateful vandalism" at one of his parish churches, which federal authorities are now investigating. Meanwhile, law enforcement in Kansas told OSV News they're closing in on suspects who ravaged and scrawled swastikas on a parish building in that state.

At St. Elizabeth of Hungary Church in Pleasant Hills, Pennsylvania, an exterior statue of Mary, as well as commemorative plaques on a bell tower and convent door, were spray-painted with anti-Catholic and antisemitic graffiti.

CBS News affiliate KDKA in Pittsburgh reported July 18 that the damage is believed to have occurred between July 8 and 9 at the church, located near Pittsburgh and part of Triumph of the Holy Cross Parish.

The Diocese of Pittsburgh confirmed the "concerning vandalism" to the news outlet, adding the incident — discovered about a week ago — had been reported to authorities.

"The anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic messages left behind have wounded not only the people of this parish but every member of our diocesan family," Eckman said in a July 19 statement provided to OSV News. "This holy place, meant for prayer, community, and the merciful presence of God has been violated in a deeply painful way."

According to KDKA, the Baldwin Borough police department turned the investigation over to the FBI.

Eckman said in his statement that "the FBI is leading the investigation," and that the diocese was "cooperating fully with law enforcement."

"I am grateful for their swift and thorough attention to this matter," said Eckman.

Bradford Arick, public affairs officer for the FBI's Pittsburgh field office, told OSV News that Department of Justice policy did not permit him "to confirm nor deny any potential investigation related to this."

KDKA reported the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh is also aware of the incident.

OSV News is awaiting a response to its request for comment from the parish.

In a separate case of vandalism with Nazi imagery inflicted on a Catholic parish, OSV News has learned that law enforcement has identified three suspects involved in extensively damaging a Catholic parish education building in Olmitz, Kansas.

The former St. Ann School, which appears to currently be used by the parish for religious education activities, was reported vandalized July 10.

Images posted to Facebook July 11 by the sheriff's office of Barton County, Kansas, showed chairs and tables upended, with books and papers strewn across the floors of what appeared to be several rooms. One stairwell was blocked by debris, with furniture, fabrics, crayons and books littering the steps.

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In one photo, a large swastika had been formed on a desktop with what appeared to be a white powder. In another image, a chalkboard could be seen with a red swastika, under which was written "all Hail Hitler."

The markings stood in stark contrast to a banner above the chalkboard that featured an angel blowing a trumpet and the words "Rejoice in the Lord."

Barton County Undersheriff Stephen Billinger told OSV News July 18 that "several small fires were also set" on the premises.

He said that "someone gave us information" that led law enforcement to three suspects, who are juveniles.

Their identities, along with details of the anticipated charges — which include arson, burglary and criminal damage — will not be released since the suspects are minors, he said.

Billinger added that he and his colleagues are "pretty confident we'll solve the case."

"I know it affects a lot of people," he said. "It's a terrible crime against the Catholic school. And thankfully, good people came forward and gave us the information we needed."

The Council on American-Islamic Relations denounced both attacks, expressing their solidarity with Catholics and Jews.

"We condemn this apparently bias-motivated attack on a religious institution and urge law enforcement authorities to swiftly apprehend and punish those responsible to the full extent of the law," CAIR-Kansas Board Chair Moussa Elbayoumy said in a July 11 statement.

CAIR-Pittsburgh executive director Christine Mohamed said in a July 19 statement, "We are deeply disturbed by this cowardly and hateful act targeting a sacred space in our region. No faith community should ever have to face this kind of hatred. We stand in full solidarity with our Catholic and Jewish neighbors and welcome the FBI's investigation into this incident. Hate has no place in Pittsburgh — or anywhere."

Both Elbayoumy and Mohamed pointed to CAIR's "Best Practices for Mosque and Community Safety" as a security resource for faith communities.

Pittsburgh's Eckman said he hoped to share more information in the days to come.

"To the faithful who feel shaken, and to all in our wider community, know that your pain is shared," he said, "and my prayers are with you for comfort and healing."